



North Carolina  
CIVIC EDUCATION  
CONSORTIUM

# Planning Lesson's, Units, and Culminating Activities

## Document Contents:

<b>I. Brainstorming a Lesson: Putting First Things First.....</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>II. Unit Plan Worksheet.....</b>	<b>Page 3-5</b>
<b>III. Planning an Issue-Based Unit.....</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>IV. Issue Selection Checklist.....</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>V. Culminating Activity Checklist.....</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>VI. Rubric Checklist.....</b>	<b>Page 9</b>

## **I. Brainstorming a Lesson: Putting First Things First**

### **Curriculum Components:**

The curriculum components describe what will be taught in the unit and should be addressed before considering instructional components and resources.

- Identify the Standard Course of Study components you wish to address.
- Develop a list of concepts, generalizations, and “big ideas” reflected in the selected competency goals.
- Based on the identified competencies and brainstormed concepts, establish a list of essential questions to jump start your unit. These questions may act as a beginning, middle, and end to your unit, and they may certainly be expanded as you teach.
- Create a list of life issues, problems, and questions that connect the competency goals to real-world interests, influences, and experiences; in other words, ask yourself, “As a student, why should I care about this unit?”
- Link your ideas to a culminating activity that allows students to demonstrate mastery, skills, and content learned during the unit. Your culminating activity should also allow your students to express themselves, so give them options by allowing them to choose between performances, activities, and various products.
- Finally, consider how you can stretch the goals of your unit beyond your classroom walls. How can your students use this knowledge every day in their community and in their citizen practices?

### **Instructional Components:**

This section offers the lessons you intend to teach and provides students with experiences that make the knowledge meaningful and relevant. Each lesson should include:

- Clear directions specifying the teacher role(s)
- Clear directions specifying the student role(s)
- Specific instructional goals and objectives that specify both content and skills
- Specific time estimates for completion
- Assessment ideas for determining student mastery

### **Resource Components:**

Always include instructional materials that attempt to accommodate different styles of learning and different types of students. If you’re going to offer a textbook-focused lesson one day, try employing a visual tool the next. If some handouts require written answers, make sure students are also given the opportunity to express themselves verbally or through an artistic format.

- Provide students with handouts, worksheets, case studies, and readings, or send them on guided web or library searches to track down the information themselves.
- Have textbook, film, map, and chart references ready to go because the more visuals you offer, the better.
- Always provide a list of community-based opportunities where students may employ their new knowledge and skill set outside of the classroom.

## II. Unit Plan Worksheet

### Curriculum Decisions:

#### Step One: Identify a Focus

Your focus should encompass real-world, real-life issues that engage student interest and participation. The focus should be selected from the yearly plan and should include major competencies identified as the focus of the course or grade level. Each unit selected or designed should relate to previous units and provide a background for subsequent units.

- Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- Unit Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- Brief Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Step Two: Specific Competencies

Identify academic expectations including knowledge and skills that will be emphasized systematically throughout the unit. Knowledge and skills may come from a single area, or even better, from several disciplines and should link ideas within steps one, three, and four.

- Identify both knowledge and skills in the following categories.
  - Social Studies:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - English/Language Arts:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Science:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Math:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Vocational/Technical:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Other:

#### Step Three: Concepts, Generalizations, and Big Ideas

These concepts, generalizations, and big ideas should be recurring and identified at various levels of instruction throughout the curriculum. They will likely be drawn from the pacing guide and focus on historical concepts like *change* and *continuity* or generalizations such as *cultures that develop in isolation*

*are likely to change less rapidly than...* Political ideas such as *limited government* and *separation of powers* are also ideas. Identifying these items will help you, as a teacher, focus on patterns and needed repetition.

- **List concepts, generalizations, and big ideas addressed in this unit.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

#### **Step Four: Essential Questions**

These questions intend to define the content specific to the unit and should correlate not only with step two, but also with step six as your essential questions will be the “beef” between the two. They will guide learning and instruction and convey a developmental sequence that helps define the organization of the unit.

- **List essential questions guiding teacher and student learning.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### **Step Five: Unit Organizer**

Select an organizer that brings authenticity to the unit; addresses life issues, problems, and questions that connect the competency goals to real-world interests, influences, and experiences; and demonstrates a realistic expectation of students’ time investment based on interest.

➤ **Life Issues:**

➤ **Problems:**

➤ **Questions:**

#### **Step Six: Culminating Activities**

The culminating activity or performance should require real-world application of the knowledge and skills emphasized during the unit. Students are expected to demonstrate their level of competence or proficiency by applying both knowledge and skills in either unfamiliar or unique situations.

- **Expectations of Students:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- **Possible Modes of Presentation:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- **Primary Goals for Demonstration of Knowledge and Skills**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- **Grading Ideas:**

1. Superior:
2. Excellent:
3. Average:
4. Below Average:
5. Poor:

Instructional Decisions

### **Step Seven: Specific Knowledge and Skills**

List and/or identify the specific knowledge and skill sets you wish students to complete and master during the unit and in order to complete the culminating activity. Identification of these sets relies upon steps 2-5 and should be a replica of step 6.

### **Step Eight: Instructional Activities and Resources**

Within the unit, create individual lesson plans and activities that provide students with experiences needed to complete the culminating activity successfully and hopefully, to apply the new skill sets outside the classroom.

### **Step Nine: Assessment Strategies**

Identify or design methods for determining the level of student mastery at various stages in the unit. Identify or print other resources needed to complete the assessment and provide students with rubrics to let them know how they will be evaluated.

### III. Planning an Issue-Based Unit

#### Curriculum Decisions:

- **Step One: Identify a Focus**  
Your focus should encompass real-world, real-life issues that engage student interest and participation. The focus should be selected from the yearly plan and should include major competencies identified as the focus of the course or grade level. Each unit selected or designed should relate to previous units and provide a background for subsequent units.
- **Step Two: Specific Competencies**  
Identify academic expectations including knowledge and skills that will be emphasized systematically throughout the unit. Knowledge and skills may come from a single area, or even better, from several disciplines and should link ideas within steps one, three, and four.
- **Step Three: Concepts, Generalizations, and Big Ideas**  
These concepts, generalizations, and big ideas should be recurring and identified at various levels of instruction throughout the curriculum.
- **Step Four: Essential Questions**  
These questions intend to define the content specific to the unit and should correlate not only with step two, but also with step six as your essential questions will be the “beef” between the two. They will guide learning and instruction and convey a developmental sequence that helps define the organization of the unit.
- **Step Five: Unit Organizer**  
Select an organizer that brings authenticity to the unit; addresses life issues, problems, and questions that connect the competency goals to real-world interests, influences, and experiences; and demonstrates a realistic expectation of students’ time investment based on interest.
- **Step Six: Culminating Activities**  
The culminating activity or performance should require real-world application of the knowledge and skills emphasized during the unit. Students are expected to demonstrate their level of competence or proficiency by applying both knowledge and skills in either unfamiliar or unique situations.

#### Instructional Decisions:

- **Step Seven: Specific Knowledge and Skills**  
List and/or identify the specific knowledge and skill sets you wish students to complete and master during the unit and in order to complete the culminating activity. Identification of these sets relies upon steps 2-5.
- **Step Eight: Instructional Activities and Resources**  
Within the unit, create individual lesson plans and activities that provide students with experiences needed to complete the culminating activity successfully, and hopefully, to apply the new skill sets outside the classroom.
- **Step Nine: Assessment Strategies**  
Identify or design methods for determining the level of student mastery at various stages in the unit. Identify or print other resources needed to complete the assessment and provide students with rubrics to let them know how they will be evaluated.

### IV. Issue Selection Checklist

Use the following categories in this checklist to help determine if your issue possesses the characteristics that bring authenticity, student interest, and viability to a unit. After making inferences regarding the likely impact of the issue, discuss how the issue might be framed to achieve your desired outcome.

<b>Issue Intensity</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Is of public importance		
Is divisive to responsible people		
Is relevant to the lives of students		
Is recurring		
Will cause community controversy		

<b>Dimension of Human Activity</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Is associated with political problems and questions		
Is associated with social problems and questions		
Is associated with economic problems and questions		
Is associated with cultural problems and questions		
Is influenced by technology		

<b>Scope</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Is a social issue		
Is a state issue		
Is a national issue		

<b>Viability for Classroom Use</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Is relevant to course objectives and goals		
Is within the scope of available materials and resources		
Is appropriate to sophistication level of students		

## V. Culminating Activity Checklist

The following questions indicate best practices suggested for culminating activities. Read and respond to the following questions; for those questions prompting a “no” answer, determine what changes are needed in order to make it a “yes.” Consider feasible methods of incorporation for each item and make the change!

Does the activity require creation of a product?	Yes	No
Does the activity require participation in a performance?		
Does the activity require participation in an exercise or an event?		
Does the activity demonstrate mastery of the specific knowledge and skills taught during the unit?		
Are the required knowledge and skills aligned with the Standard Course of Study for Social Studies?		
Is the culminating activity engaging for students?		
Are the roles of each individual, team member, and class member clear?		
Is the target audience clearly identified?		
Does the activity involve an audience beyond the school?		
Is the timeline for the activity clear?		
Are there clear directions for carrying out the activity?		
Are the print and other necessary resources clearly identified?		
Is there a rubric to use in assessing both completeness and quality of the activity?		

## VI. Rubric Checklist

As you review your unit, determine if it includes each of the following components. Determine if the directions are concise and clear enough to allow someone to teach the unit without further assistance from its creators.

<b>Components:</b>	<b>Included</b>	<b>Not Included</b>
The Standard Course of Study competencies come directly from the document and reflect the true content and nature of the unit's focus.		
The unit includes essential questions that both the teacher and the students are expected to answer over the course of their study. These essential questions not only relate directly to the curriculum, but also push students to think beyond the classroom to real-world application.		
The unit identifies the materials and resources suggested to complete the unit so that teachers have time to anticipate their needs before delving deeper into the subject area. If a copyrighted resource is used, always provide a detailed citation so that it can be easily accessed by potential users.		
A Breakdown of Roles: The unit should provide clear directions, objectives, and goals that specify the role of the teacher and the role of the student.		
The unit should provide specific goals and objectives that not only specify content and skills, but also time estimates for completion.		
Each unit should contain and/or provide assessment tools for determining student mastery of targeted content and skills. Include ideas for using relevant field experiences and community resources in individual lessons when appropriate.		